



MONTEREY COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The safety and well-being of our visitors and community is of utmost importance to the Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau (MCCVB). The goal of this Crisis Communications Plan is consistent with the Mission of the MCCVB (*to drive business growth to the benefit of guests, members and the community, responsibly*) and is intended to help ensure the safety and well-being of all visitors, as well as our members, by providing accurate information and visible leadership in a timely fashion should crisis arise. In addition, this plan establishes communication protocols to ensure Monterey County visitors, hospitality and community partners are provided accurate and relevant information related to the crisis.

No two crises are alike and no destination is immune to disaster or crisis. Preparing for an occurrence is the best way to help offset lasting, negative impacts. It is the goal of the MCCVB to respond to emergencies and crises with professionalism, integrity and confidence.

In any crisis situation, MCCVB's primary focus will be on proactively managing communication channels that directly impact current visitors, potential visitors, family and friends of visitors, MCCVB members, group and meeting clients and the media. MCCVB will work with the affected agencies including public services, law enforcement and local governments to develop and manage such communications.

A. CRISIS SCENARIOS

1. A crisis is any unfavorable situation with the potential to impact visitation to Monterey County on a wide-scale basis, and/or the potential to generate negative publicity for the county and potentially impact local tourism, hospitality, conference/convention or film industries. Two primary types of crisis include:
 - a. Natural Crisis
An emergency caused by the environment including floods, windstorms, earthquakes, contagious diseases, fires, tsunami, natural crop/food poisoning, etc.
 - b. Human-Created Crisis
A situation brought about by human action including a bombing or bomb threat, riot, strike, murder, mass shooting, plane crash, hazardous waste or oil spill, prolonged power outage, controversial ballot measure, etc.
2. In the event of either type of crisis, the MCCVB Crisis Management Team (CMT) will meet to assess the situation and develop a specific plan for responding to the crisis.

B. CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM (CMT)

In the immediate wake of a crisis, MCCVB's President & CEO should be contacted first and apprised of the situation. If necessary and appropriate, he/she will then notify the Board Chair. A determination will then be made by the President & CEO to assemble the CMT at the MCCVB office or an appropriate location immediately. The President & CEO will also act as the liaison to local jurisdiction officials.

The CMT shall include the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and be responsible for the release and flow of all relevant information to industry media; MCCVB team members, stakeholders and clients; state and national tourism offices and international tourism/PR agencies around incidents affecting visitors to the destination and the potential impacts to Monterey County’s tourism economy.

The CMT will meet at regular intervals to provide updates on the situation, and assess risks and management issues. The CMT can also include MCCVB team members, board members, hospitality community representatives, and government officials. Please note that these individuals are liaisons to particular groups or officials; they are not spokespeople for the MCCVB unless noted. In the event that the President & CEO is unavailable to serve as spokesperson, the next CMT member in the list below will take his/her place. In the event that person is unable to serve as spokesperson then the next on the list steps in, and so on.

Core team members:

Title	CMT Role
President & CEO	Approves all messages; acts as spokesperson unless otherwise designated; liaises with Board and Executive Committee and local government officials; is informed of and directs all work of CMT
VP of Operations	Shares information with MCCVB staff; ensures business continuity in IT services and equipment as needed; conduit of communications with Board and Committee members as needed
VP of Finance & Regulatory Affairs	Works with VP of Operations to ensure business continuity; identifies cash flow for the MCCVB and ensures credit limits are sufficient
VP of Business Development	Works with Director of Strategic Client Services to share approved messaging and information on crisis with clients in the destination; contacts and shares messaging with incoming clients; directs strategy for business development team on distribution of information
Dir. of Marketing Communications	Works with President & CEO to frame messaging; directs strategy for marketing and web teams on distribution of information. Audits current advertising programs and content in marketplace that are being distributed; halts advertising if needed; directs marketing and web teams on distribution of information and update of information online; guides content marketing strategy and messaging through social media. Develops appropriate recovery campaigns as needed
Dir. Stakeholder & Visitor Engagement	Shares information and guides appropriate responses for visiting public on crisis with visitor services team;

shares information as needed with local jurisdiction partners, community stakeholders; serves as stakeholder contact; works with stakeholder engagement team to draft and distribute approved member communications updates

Director of Strategic Client Services Assess group/meeting ramifications; provides information to client services team and approved messaging

Public Relations Manager Works with CEO and Director of Marketing Communications to assess PR ramifications and develop media response; serves as media contact; drafts communications update/Market Situation Report for media and industry partners.

CMT Communications Network

If the crisis affects visitors to Monterey County or the health of the tourism economy, the Director of Marketing Communications will support the lead agency with crafting media statements, communicating proactively with industry media and group/meeting clients. In these cases, MCCVB's partners will be apprised of MCCVB's position and know whom at the MCCVB media/client calls should be directed. In some crisis events, another entity will take the lead in making decisions and communicating information. In those instances, MCCVB's President & CEO will effectively work with the lead agency and the CMT to potentially craft and ultimately disseminate information to clients, visitors, and the hospitality community. MCCVB's PR Manager, Director of Stakeholder & Visitor Engagement and Director of Strategic Client Services will also refer media, visitors, stakeholders, group clients and industry partners to the designated spokesperson.

Once a designation has been made and an action plan/message points have been developed, copies of the plan with appropriate contact information and spokespersons will be distributed to the following entities:

- MCCVB Staff
- MCCVB Board of Directors & Committee Members
- Industry partners when appropriate

C. ACTION PLAN

1. **Call together core CMT:** Contact the immediate core members of CMT and call a meeting at a designated location. Unless otherwise noted in the meeting invitation, the designated location is the MCCVB office at 787 Munras Ave., Suite 110, Monterey, CA. In the event that the MCCVB office is not able to be accessed, the Monterey County Courthouse (240 Church St, Salinas, CA 93901) will serve as the second gathering place.

The CMT will then decide if MCCVB will issue communications to members, community partners, visitors, and clients. The President & CEO will contact affected local government agencies and establish communication channels.

2. **Identify the Spokesperson(s):** Depending upon the nature of the crisis, one to two spokespersons should be identified as the ONLY individuals designated to speak with the public and media. If the crisis is not directly related to tourism, deflect spokesperson assignments to

the proper authorities. In most cases, MCCVB will support the local government agency in messaging where needed.

The MCCVB President & CEO is to act as the spokesperson for all events unless the crisis involves the integrity of the President & CEO or if they are unavailable. In such cases, the MCCVB Board Chair will be the lead spokesperson.

Until the messaging and communications plan is written, be prepared to field questions around the event. These are three types of messages you can share with the media:

- I know and I can tell you . . .
- I know, but I can't tell you and here's why . . .
- I don't know, but I'll find out.

A general statement such as this is appropriate for preliminary inquiries:

MCCVB is aware of the situation and has initiated its crisis communications plan. Our Crisis Management Team is working diligently to understand all aspects of this crisis before providing information to the media, travel and meetings partners or the community. We are making every effort to evaluate the situation and work with community (or regional as appropriate) leaders as they assess the best course of action. We will provide information as soon as we can in regards to this crisis.

- 3. Identify & Isolate/Fact Finding:** The President & CEO will direct the CMT to set out to gathering information in order to determine the magnitude of the situation. In most cases, this can be executed via phone calls or meetings with affected agencies. In some cases, this might include physically scouting parts of the County and reporting on the status of hotels, attractions, public roadways and displaced tourists. The CMT will determine the severity of the situation as well as “what if” scenarios should the crisis compound. The CMT will focus in on the area involved and also identify unaffected tourism areas in addition to research/compilation of favorable statistics for ensuing media inquiries.
- 4. Develop Crisis Action Plan and Message Points:** Upon completion of the fact-finding mission and prior to meeting with the media/public, the President & CEO will direct the CMT in formulating an assessment of the crisis including an action plan. This document will be shared with the MCCVB Board of Directors and will include findings from the fact-finding stage in addition to message points. The President & CEO will direct the Director of Marketing Communications and PR Manager in preparing message points which may include a Q&A for all sanctioned spokespersons and a communication plan for distribution of messaging. Contact with the corresponding agency shall be coordinated by the President & CEO and collaboration on messaging to the visiting guests will begin. Spokesperson should demonstrate concern and empathy, and convey integrity. Talking points should be fact-driven, concise, consistent and accurate at the time of delivery. These points will serve as the basis for regular updates on the destination.

Using the approved message points, the Director of Marketing Communications will direct the social messaging during the crisis. The first 24 hours are critical and misinformation can spread quickly on social channels. Tone, context, channel, voice and delivery are all important. While emotions are running high, tone of the message will remain factual but empathetic and link to further information that will be posted on the SeeMonterey.com website.

Message points should:

- Empathize with the victims of the crisis first and foremost without owning the crisis
- Share priorities for the MCCVB, to include the safety and quality experience for our visitors
- List accurate facts at the time of delivery
- Identify the exact location with a Google map link, if available
- Provide background on cause/effect at the time of delivery
- Provide an update on immediate steps being taken to abate crisis/assist victims
- Mitigate immediate damage due to false information, local media exaggeration, guesswork or negative perceptions
- Establish MCCVB as a reliable source of accurate and responsible information

5. **Alert Tourism Partners:** Once the spokespersons have been identified and message points outlined, the PR Manager and Director of Stakeholder and Visitor Engagement will alert key tourism partners to alleviate sending any mixed messages. These message points should be sent to partners that may include the Monterey County Hospitality Association (MCHA), Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association (MCVGA), Arts Council for Monterey County, Monterey County Film Commission, Monterey County Farm Bureau, Chambers of Commerce, Visit California, San Francisco Travel, Central Coast Tourism Council (CCTC), CalTravel and local and state Visitor Centers.

6. **Spread the Word:** A separate one page Market Situation Report (MSR) will be drafted (as needed) by the Director of Marketing Communications to provide MCCVB members, stakeholders, and agencies with immediate information on the crisis as well as position MCCVB as a proactive partner. This update will include the facts, situation, action plan and crafted message points. It may also include additional resource links, maps, local media coverage and partner websites. The update may be issued by the lead agency on the current situation analysis and may not need to be issued by MCCVB. This update will be posted on www.SeeMonterey.com, and may be distributed to the following entities:

- MCCVB Staff and Monterey Visitors Center, by the Director of Stakeholder & Visitor Engagement
- MCCVB Board of Directors, by the VP of Operations
- MCCVB members, by the Director of Stakeholder & Visitor Engagement
- Hotel general manager/sales staff for distribution to front line workers, by the VP of Business Development
- Local attractions and transportation services, by the Director of Stakeholder & Visitor Engagement
- Monterey County partners including Monterey County Hospitality Association, Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association, Arts Council for Monterey County, Monterey County Film Commission, Monterey County Farm Bureau and Chambers of Commerce, by the Director of Stakeholder & Visitor Engagement
- State and Regional industry partners, including Visit California, San Francisco Travel, Central Coast Tourism Council (CCTC) and CalTravel, by the PR Manager
- International tourism partners, including all BRAND USA offices, public relations bureaus under contract with the State of California or MCCVB by the Director of Marketing Communications

Using the approved message points, the Director of Marketing Communications will ensure the dissemination of messaging via social/digital owned channels, as appropriate, during the crisis.

The Director of Stakeholder & Visitor Engagement will disseminate information via email to the designated stakeholders.

7. **Create a Safety Net:** In the event that tourists or area residents are displaced and require food or shelter, the Director of Stakeholder and Visitor Engagement may execute outreach to local hotels, Red Cross and tourism authorities in an attempt to relocate people in need. In addition, if there is a need to house crisis teams traveling into the area, MCCVB is available and able to assist in locating lodging for these individuals. A simple outreach to hotel partners for those in need is appropriate.

In crisis scenarios, there may or may not be access to the internet or phones. The CMT and MCCVB Board Chair will receive bi-annual printouts of all members including contacts, emails, addresses, and phone numbers to use in a crisis.

8. **Establish a Hot Line:** The Director of Stakeholder Engagement will select an existing telephone line as the hotline for immediate updates, inquiries or tourist-related questions. The line will be staffed by the Visitor Services Manager or their designate who is well versed on the situation. In the event that tourists are displaced, this hot line can also function as a clearinghouse for hotel reassignment.

If appropriate, the hotline shall be the visitor's center number that is routed through the MCCVB main office. The line shall be staffed/monitored as long as deemed necessary by the President & CEO which may include evenings and/or weekend coverage.

9. **Halt Advertising Buys:** Depending on the nature of the crisis, it may be directed by the President & CEO to the Director of Marketing Communications to immediately pull advertising buys and request a comeback strategy and timeline from the Marketing Communications team and designated advertising agency and public relations agency.

D. Media Outreach

To ensure accurate coverage and build bridges for a post-crisis comeback, the media must have a main link to immediate information. The Director of Marketing Communications will work with the lead agency's communications team to support the dissemination of information where needed and provide quotes as needed. Communications should begin with a very empathetic message.

1. **Spokesperson:** Ensure the designated spokespersons are well versed and up to date with the information, Q&A's and possible scenarios.
2. **Media Materials:** A market situation report (MSR) may be issued on the SeeMonterey.com website immediately and continued in intervals until the crisis has abated. If applicable, this might include updates on the Travel Alert page, "Media Alert" on pending press conferences or a "Tourism Update" on the status of hotels, attractions, transportation and infrastructure.

Four channels of distribution that should be considered:

- SeeMonterey.com, San Francisco Travel, CCTC, and VisitCalifornia.com: Four of the most economical means for distributing updates to the media and tourism industry.
- The materials should be accessible and visible on the homepage of SeeMonterey.com
- E-Mail Blast: Utilize the email database of all major media outlets, wire services, national TV bureaus and key market newspaper bureaus;

- PR Agencies: send press releases and updates to public relations agencies contracted by the MCCVB and its partners where known.
 - Group Business Development/Tour & Travel Outreach: To ensure the flow of business, an outreach to key meeting planners, receptive tour operators, travel agents, and publications is imperative. The Group Business Development team should create a list of upcoming meetings booked two to six months out and provide a market update to meeting planners stating the situation and alerting them that their pending meeting site and area has or has not been affected.
3. Media Conference: In some cases, it may be appropriate to stage an immediate press conference. The MCCVB's role would be support if the lead agency decided to host a press conference. The strategy behind this might have multiple goals:

The fact-finding mission is imperative before a conference is staged. Message points should be created for all spokespersons and will differ depending upon the situation. The spokesperson's message should always be one of sympathy for lives lost or injured, shock at the tragedy at hand and hope for restoring the area and/or situation. The second spokesperson should be the one wielding the facts, generally the Chief of Police, Coast Guard or other official. MCCVB's role is to help provide useful statistics where possible. The President & CEO would be a spokesperson at this type of conference if there are updates on the tourism industry required, including hotels/attractions status, transportation information, etc.

4. Satellite News Release: Depending upon the severity of the crisis, a satellite news release can distribute a visual account of the situation that, in scenarios such as an earthquake, tsunami or oil spill, speaks volumes. This is also effective in dispelling misconceptions. The video news release is a simple 3-5 minute edited segment depicting a spokesperson at different locales throughout the County and must contain a news update to warrant coverage. It can document a positive side of a crisis, cleanup program or areas unaffected. The feed is then sent via satellite to news stations across the nation for pick up. This vehicle can also be successful as part of a post-crisis campaign.
5. Social Media Outreach: Utilizing materials developed, a similar outreach will be conducted to social media outlets including blogs and websites that serve tourism to Monterey County. The satellite video release can be cross-purposed to You Tube, CNN i-report and a variety of streaming video forums. Photo updates depicting the affected area will be posted with time/date stamps showing actual damage and/or progress, etc.

E. MEDIA MONITORING

1. Electronic Coverage: An ongoing television, print, digital and social media monitoring program will help establish both the short - and long-term action plans relating to the crisis. This can be conducted by the Director of Marketing Communications or their designate in conjunction with Broadcast Monitoring Service and social listening service. Daily monitoring will help determine:

- The scope of coverage, local versus national and international
- The perception/message the media is delivering to the mass public
- Consumer/Visitor sentiment
- The immediate steps required to offset misconceptions (e.g., freeways closed, beaches covered in oil, tourism areas affected)
- The long-term comeback strategy

2. Internet Tracking: Simultaneously, the Director of Marketing Communications or their designate will track all additional articles regarding the incident via the internet to determine the depth of coverage and short - and long-term action plans. This may include any press outreach done by the MCCVB to correct messaging/dispel myths. Key message points can be tracked and analyzed as well as pockets of coverage to determine which markets were hardest hit.

3. Social Media Monitoring; In conjunction with traditional media monitoring, the Director of Marketing Communications or their designate will also track social media conversations in real-time. If warranted, the VP of Marketing Communications will decide if the Content Manager should engage in conversations on social media networks to dispel rumors and disseminate information using approved message points and FAQ

F. LONG-TERM REBOUND

The PR Manager will communicate regularly with Visit California, Brand USA and/or San Francisco Travel's Public Relations teams to coordinate messages and media strategies. Once the crisis is abated, the PR Manager will begin proactively pitching positive stories to regional, national and international media. The Director of Marketing Communications will also develop comprehensive marketing strategies and messages to continue the positive branding of the destination. In addition, the following should be considered in the ongoing effort to re-establish the destination as a safe and desirable travel location:

1. All travel writers who have visited the area in the last six-twelve months should receive a personal invitation to return and evaluate the effect of the crisis.
2. Produce a video highlighting attractions and hotel properties that are not affected. Target local celebrities to complement the President & CEO as spokespersons.
3. Shoot photo and video footage for post-crisis promotions.
4. If applicable, develop bumper (video footage) for any upcoming televised programs that originate in the area.
5. Review current advertising campaigns/marketing programs to determine if messages are appropriate or reevaluate/redefine.
6. Work with other departments and partners to develop new marketing messages and strategies.
7. After the crisis has subsided (1-4 months later, depending on the nature of the crisis), begin advertising strongly in primary markets. Design and purchase advertising in trades and public media concerning the area's status for travelers.
8. Develop post-crisis message points for use during any necessary recovery media FAMs.
9. Provide regular interviews and updates to the media.
10. Proactively keep industry partners (media, international marketing affiliates, tour operators, film professionals, meeting planners, etc.) informed of developments, progress, and long-term impact of crisis.
11. Incorporate post-crisis outreach into the business plan for at least one year after crisis.

G. Debrief: Debriefing is a critical step in the process. The CMT will look back on the crisis – and define what we did well and what we would do differently. Things to consider should include:

- Were stakeholders notified in a timely and efficient way?
- Were the roles of the various crisis team members generally understood?
- Were the appropriate stakeholders quickly identified and engaged in response to the situation?

- Was the crisis assessment criteria effective in determining the most appropriate and response strategy needed?
- Was the most appropriate spokesperson identified for the response?
- Was all outside/external support brought in and utilized efficiently?
- Was the Crisis Management Team notified quickly enough?

H. Training the Team: Review the Crisis Communications Plan with the CMT

- Conduct regular trainings to ensure each member of the team is well informed and prepared in the event of a crisis.
- (If necessary) Conduct an annual simulation or drill with the team to practice and/or discuss the response to a crisis.

Updated: October 19

NOTE: Review this plan every six months and update as necessary.